

Pathways for Youth

A photograph of a young man with dark hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt, a tan baseball cap, and purple work gloves. He is holding a shovel and standing in a forest with many thin trees. Another person in a blue shirt is visible in the background.

Lowell National Historical Park

www.nps.gov/lowe



Connecting Youth to Parks

For nearly two decades, Lowell National Historical Park has been reaching out to youth through various programs that provide a better understanding of the values of their national parks, both locally and throughout the country. Lowell has become a “portal” to a generation of urban youth that may have never experienced a national park before, may have never thought of a career with the National Park Service, or pursued an exploration of national parks within the system.

There is intentionality to the Lowell youth outreach and recruitment strategy. Park staff has developed meaningful relationships with high schools, non-profit organizations, and the local community college and university that provide for community service, internships and employment opportunities. These partnerships have proven to be invaluable connectors to large numbers of youth and student advisors.

A “pyramid” of opportunities for youth to connect with the park over their school age years keeps students engaged. For many youth, the first entry point to their park experiences is through curriculum-based education programs presented through the Tsongas Industrial History Center. The sequence of programs is tiered to allow for progressive understanding of the park and its history as each program builds upon the knowledge learned through previous visits. As they advance through school field trips, some students participate in summer camps, then after-school enrichment programs and eventually summer work programs. By working closely with these youth, park staff identify “leaders” among them and offer volunteer and internship opportunities, and summer seasonal employment opportunities through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). The ultimate goal is to identify youth and hire them through the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) which leads to a permanent position in the park as Student Career Intakes.

This approach provides opportunities to recruit from a diverse community, and train the next generation of park stewards and employees through a “career track” designed to encourage students with leadership potential to consider a career in the National Park Service.

*“It is said that
the creation of
a National Park
is an expression
of faith
in the future.
It is a pact
between generations,
a promise from
past to present.”*

Rethinking the National Parks
for the 21st Century,
National Park System
Advisory Board

Partnerships are formed on many levels to support youth programs. National initiatives such as the Youth Conservation Corps and the Public Lands Corps along with the Youth Partnership Program and Volunteers In Parks Program provide guidance and funding for opportunities. Local partners including schools and community organizations allow for the realization of youth programming at the park level.

The Lowell Spindle City Corps

Under the aegis of the **Spindle City Corps**, with a mission of service, diversity and education, Lowell National Historical Park, working in partnership with **Community Teamwork Inc.**, provides opportunities for summer and year round employment focusing on job training, life skills, and leadership development opportunities for economically and culturally diverse youth ages 15-21. The SCC also employs team leaders who progressed through the program to a leadership position. The SCC prepares, encourages, and challenges young people to address environmental and social issues in their community. Corps members acquire the skills necessary to be the leaders of today and the future.

Youth Theater Team

Under the guidance of interpretive staff members, an advisor, and a youth leader participants research characters and wear 19th century historic costumes as they stroll through historic downtown Lowell interacting with visitors at Park sites such as the trolley, the Mill Girls and Immigrants

Exhibit, and the Boott Cotton Mills Museum providing formal and informal interpretive programs as first person characters.

Maintenance Team

Funded through **Public Lands Corps** and **Youth Conservation Corps** monies these youths work with park maintenance staff to complete maintenance projects and care for park sites visited as part of summer interpretive program offerings. The work experience includes the chance to explore career opportunities with an emphasis on stewardship. The projects connect the youth to the park resources and the greater Lowell community.

In addition to the key programs listed above, the Spindle City Youth Corp has administered two additional programs:

The Artship Enterprise An art studio on wheels, this bus brings art projects to Lowell National Historical Park and the local community including special events at local parks, neighborhoods and schools. Activities provided engage young people and develop connections to park resources and history.

Service Team Students who excel in the summer program are invited to join the year round team. Members meet weekly participating in activities geared towards leadership development and preparation for leading summer programs. Team members also participate and represent the park in community service projects one Saturday a month.



Leadership: Progressive experiences that challenge the youth lead to personal growth. Youth advance through positions with higher levels of responsibilities. These youth also provide recruitment assistance to others in the community.

More on
Partnership
Programs



Stewardship: The key stakeholders in youth programming are the youth. Meaningful experiences that teach them about their history and allow them to share their stories will encourage them to care for the resources.





Skills Development: Park mentors work alongside youth to develop life skills and job skills. Talented and interested youth are recruited and nurtured for placement in SCEP positions.



Trades Skills Program

Vocational Technical High School students participate in a Historic Preservation Skills Training Program that employs youth from local schools interested in pursuing careers in maintenance and trade skills including carpentry, electrical, HVAC, painting and mechanical repair. Students are employed part-time during the school year and full-time in the summer.

Volunteers In Parks

VIPs research and present a variety of formal and informal programs including orientation walks and canal tours. They conduct basic research to present interpretive programs. Young volunteers assist as junior camp counselors and first mates on canal boats gaining valuable exposure to park programs and staff developing interests in working at the park.

Interns

Student Conservation Association
Paid internships are offered during the summer in partnership with the SCA in the field of interpretation and visitor services for graduating high school seniors and/or freshman and sophomore college students. Work experience gained through internships provides avenues for students to qualify for summer seasonal employment as GS-04 Park Rangers.

Local college and high school work study students and interns assist in staffing interpretive sites, working alongside administrative, curatorial and maintenance staff.



Community Service: Fostering a sense of pride in their city the youth understand they can make a difference. Good citizens are developed through many levels of contributions to the community.



The park fosters an evolving approach to career opportunities for youth through progressive summer work programs. Promising students are identified early and hired for seasonal positions as they are mentored to strengthen competencies in the NPS mission, leadership and stewardship on the path to permanent employment. These actions increase connections through the development of a diverse workforce representing the local community.

STEP / Student Temporary Employment Program

Developmental Seasonal Employment Positions

Seasonal STEP employees work alongside interpretive staff to develop confidence and skills such as public speaking while providing basic customer service to visitors. Each summer these employees, often high school students, are introduced to National Park Service career opportunities through this developmental appointment.

Many local college students, who gained experience through their previous work in the park, progress to the next level. Accepting greater challenges that build upon their previous work experiences some present tours about the stories of Lowell, stories that unfold in their own backyards and involve their own family's history.

SCIP / Student Career Intake Program

The Mass Parks Student Career Intake Program provides a structured progression of career training and employment with the National Park Service for high school and college age youth from diverse communities in Massachusetts. This program takes a multi-year approach beginning with high-school age summer youth programs that build from year to year creating a strong base and program sustainability.

Promising students gain practical work experience combined with training resulting in a cadre of college graduates eager to contribute professionally to the NPS. Inclusion of employees from these diverse communities increases the diversity of the Service and, in turn, our relevancy in the 21st Century.

SCIP is distinct from other NPS youth programs as it builds on the seasonal opportunities high school aged youth gain through YCC, PLC, or SCA programming to accomplish the goal of permanent employment with the National Park Service.

Pathways to Permanent Positions

SCEP / Student Career Experience Program

Promising youth employees are identified and nurtured for recruitment into SCEP positions leading towards permanent positions within the NPS. Students gain exposure to meaningful assignments in the community and hands-on experience in exploring career choices. NPS managers recruit and train diverse employees that reflect the community and meet the needs of the park.



Saoran Ro euth

Park Ranger Saoran Ro euth's path to permanent employment with the Lowell National Historical Park:





Wearing a uniform means many things—that I always have to show respect for others, setting a standard for others my age and ethnicity like me....

Linda Doung
Park Aide, 2007, 2008 and 2009
Park Ranger, 2010



Saram Roeth
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical
High School Student / Spindle City Corps
Maintenance Team, 2008 and 2009

How fortunate I am that I can tell people about the city I have lived in all my life, what this city was, is, and what it means to me.

Victoria Vann
Spindle City Corps
Theater Team, 2008
Park Guide, 2009 and 2010



I hope one day to be able to look back at my younger years and be proud to say, “I worked for the National Park Service and I helped change the world.”

Rhaissa Pereira Menezes
Lowell High School Student
Spindle City Corps
Theater Team, 2008 and 2009



I knew that my hard work made this place look clean and beautiful... and now I know that I have the power to change, to make a difference in our community.

Uy Hor Eav
Lowell High School Student
Spindle City Corps
Maintenance Team, 2009 and 2010

